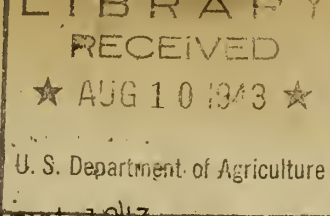


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August 1943

1/ ORGANIZING FOR FACE-TO-FACE NUTRITION EDUCATION 1/

Planning, coordinating, and promoting programs of nutrition education to meet the wartime food needs of all rural and urban families are the present tasks of nutrition committees: Local, State, and Federal. These are important assignments, calling for wholehearted cooperation of all the agencies, private and public, working in the field of health and nutrition.

The development of nutrition committees, the programs they have sponsored, and the results attained show wide variations. Plans have succeeded and plans have failed. Some have followed usual patterns, some have made minor modifications in usual patterns, still others have been experimental.

Studies to examine objectively the relative merits of different plans of organization for nutrition education have been initiated. This report analyzes the effectiveness with which nutrition committees organized and used the face-to-face method of disseminating information in the Share-the-Meat Campaign. Other studies will be reported at a later date.

Intensive studies of the effectiveness were conducted in Missouri, South Carolina, and Rhode Island. In addition, the chairmen of the nutrition committees of the States reported on their individual experiences and the regional nutritionists made regional analyses of their programs. As a result it is possible to appraise the program as a whole, examine the organizing methods that were followed, and indicate some of the next steps in planning for a long-time program in nutrition education.

State nutrition committees were in various stages of organization and functioning in all States before the launching of the Share-the-Meat Campaign. There were considerable differences between States and counties in kinds of programs sponsored, and in the understanding and relationships that prevailed between the agencies having membership on the committees.

Before this campaign the nutrition committees, in the main, were engaged in setting up their organizations and in developing and promoting "general" problems of nutrition education. The assignment of a specific war program stimulated them to complete the organizations they had been building for the past few years. State committees further developed their own committee organizations and planned to give more active leadership to the county committees. In many instances this meant helping to organize county nutrition committees or to reorganize inactive ones.

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Probably the greatest single gain in the organization plans was realized when the State nutrition committees moved to district the States and assign a specific member of the State committee, provided with travel funds, to be the official contact person between State and county committees. Some States had been doing this with good results, but many county committees now had State leadership for the first time. The district plan, with the use of a contact person, improved the morale of county committees. Contact with county committees also meant that State committees now had direct contact with the local committees which placed nutrition education programs directly before the people. The net result was the strengthening of nutrition committees at all levels.

Many State nutrition committees had restricted their membership to persons trained in nutrition. This policy excluded many interested and capable leaders. When the Share-the-Meat Campaign was proposed to State committees they were quick to see that a successful program would require additional leaders, particularly leaders with organizational ability. Consequently, virtually all committees broadened their memberships to include interested community lay leaders. Some nutrition committees brought in the most experienced available persons in organizations to head up the Share-the-Meat Campaign.

Responsibility for developing a State program, to coordinate the activities of all agencies that had been asked to take some part in the campaign, was delegated to nutrition committees of State Defense Councils.

At the local level, nutrition committees of the Defense Councils had the major responsibility for coordinating the activities of the agencies working in the field of nutrition, and for training block and neighborhood leaders in the purpose of the program so that they in turn could intelligently solicit the cooperation of the families. The Block Organization of the local Defense Council had the responsibility for organizing block leaders for the urban areas, and for planning the block leader training meetings. The Extension Service, having already organized the rural areas through the neighborhood-leader plan, had the responsibility for bringing the neighborhood leaders together for training by the nutrition committees.

This was the full suggested plan for organizing the campaign. It was generally followed. Time, patience, and skill were required in getting each agency to agree to play its assigned part. In large measure the campaign succeeded or failed to the extent that each fulfilled its role.

Where the nutrition committees were weak, or did not recognize and accept the program as important, there had been no great activity on the part of the Defense Councils and Extension Service in mobilizing their respective organizations - block and neighborhood leaders. If the Defense Councils either were not convinced of the importance of a face-to-face method or did not have time to get the block leaders organized and to training meetings, then nutrition committees were hindered, in that, the organization for getting the program to the families was not working. If the Extension Service, not recognizing the importance of the program or having other activities scheduled at the time of the Share-the-Meat Campaign, did not throw its full weight into mobilizing the neighborhood



leaders, then rural areas were not adequately covered.

The success of the face-to-face method of disseminating information depended on obtaining a maximum understanding by and the cooperation of all families. Previous nutrition education programs had suggested this as a promising method, especially when the success of the program depended upon each family's understanding the program as a whole and realizing that its success required the active support of all families.

To learn the extent to which families were affected by the face-to-face method of explaining the campaign and whether they were cooperating, in some degree, as a result, selected urban and rural families were re-visited, after the campaign was over to find out: (1) What the families had learned about the campaign from the visit by the block or neighborhood leader; (2) from what sources the families had heard of the campaign; and (3) which source of information had been most helpful to them in understanding the need for the voluntary sharing of meat. Some information was also obtained as to the extent to which families said they were cooperating, and the interest that these families were expressing by attending food demonstrations.

Information collected on the face-to-face method as used in promoting the Share-the-Meat Campaign supports the following generalizations:

- (1) Families generally had a good understanding of the "what" and "why" of the campaign. Urban families were better informed than the rural families.
- (2) Although the majority of the families had heard of the campaign from more than one source, those who had been personally visited said that the block and neighborhood leader contacts together with the "leave-at-homes," were the most informative. The two helped them to grasp the significance of the program and to see the part each person had to play.
- (3) In general, the personal contacts in the urban areas were made by block leaders, salvage leaders, and air-raid wardens. In the cities where the block leader plan of organization was well established, these leaders visited as high as 80 percent of the families. Where salvage leaders and other contact methods were used, coverage fell to as low as 10 percent. In many cities block leaders were not organized in time to conduct the campaign.
- (4) The campaign was promoted in rural areas by different face-to-face methods. Home visits were made by neighborhood leaders, community leaders, and by Home Demonstration club leaders. In addition, many rural areas were covered through group meetings. Mailing lists were also used in some States.
- (5) There is a need for great flexibility in methods of organization for both rural and urban areas.

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- (6) Families expressed some interest in attending food demonstrations. This expression was more frequent among the families who had been visited by block and neighborhood leaders.
- (7) Although coverage was far from complete the results indicated that the face-to-face method had value in promoting the campaign, and this method appears to be a worthy adjunct to other methods of disseminating information.

Future programs in nutrition education will probably offer many problems similar to those found in the Share-the-Meat Campaign. With the experience thus gained, future assignments will be undertaken with confidence. On the whole, nutrition committees were strengthened as a result of having a specific assignment in the Share-the-Meat Campaign; leaders generally have a much better understanding about the place of the nutrition committees in nutrition war programs; and nutrition committees have a better understanding of how to work through the medium of block leaders and neighborhood leaders. Caution should be used against the development of rigid procedures. Provision should always be made for utilizing the pertinent local organizations and resources. At the Federal level, emphasis should be placed on developing genuinely useful war programs in nutrition so that nutrition committees may continue to feel that their work is worth while. The State committees will need to adjust the federally developed plans to State needs and situations, clear them with appropriate agencies, and provide aggressive leadership to county nutrition committees. The program should be further adjusted by the county committees to fit the county, city, and local levels and the appropriate organizations should be mobilized for carrying the program to the people.

When the programs reach the people, they will represent the ideas and suggestions developed by the Federal and State nutrition committees as adjusted to meet the cultural and economic variations of the locality. With this kind of planning, local nutrition committees can probably be counted on to assume a forceful part in nutrition education and the local people will extend fuller cooperation and response.

With food now considered as one of the major weapons of war, many adjustments may be expected in our future war food programs. Families will need to be kept currently informed regarding these changes. They will cooperate if they understand the reasons back of the suggestions and are given help in planning ways to cooperate.

If families are expected to make major changes in their food habits, it will be necessary to plan for more than just letting them know the facts. They will need to understand the background of the suggested changes and be given actual help in making adjustments. Some of the changes may require fundamental changes in attitudes and food habits.

Experience gained in the Share-the-Meat Campaign indicates that, of the many methods which may be used in planning for future programs in nutrition education, the best method will be the one that the local people agree upon as being adaptable to their own situation and needs. In many cases, leaders will need to be taught methods in organization. In some areas there will be a need for local adjustments in organization to permit the launching of a substantial education nutrition program. This will include utilizing local groups. The group method best assures that the program will reach the maximum number of people.